(c) The financial assistance extended by Tea Board under its Plan Scheme for new planting activity in new areas, is as under:

Year	Amount disbursed (Rs. Lakhs)
2000-01	238.11
2001-02	365.00
2002-03	601.67

The amount disbursed during 2002-03 includes committed expenditure of 9th Plan cases and grant for raising tea nurseries.

Free trade agreement with EU

†2023. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the European Union is considering to sign a free trade agreement with India;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the conditions of the above trade agreement; and

(d) the time frame fixed for the purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) No such proposal has been received.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Investment by NRIs

†2024. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that pace of capital investment by the NRIs is very slow:

(b) if so, the reason therefor; and

(c) if not, the extent of investment made so far?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMECE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYA SAGAR RAO): (a) to (c) Investment by NRIs, like other forms of Foreign Direct Investment, is determined by a number of factors, both internal and external. Besides the commercial decisions of the investor, global economic environment, corporate strategy of the transnational corporations and investors and domestic economic environment also play a major role. The NRI investments including those under Schemes of RBI has been US $ 2684.51 million from August 1991 till September 2003.

ITPO's incentive scheme for employees

2025. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether India Trade Promotion Organisation has introduced an incentive scheme for its employees in September, 1996;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the scheme was approved by Government;

(d) if not, how much irregular payment has been made till October, 2003;

(e) whether DPE guidelines issued in March, 1996 never authorised Public Sector Enterprises to introduce such a scheme; and

(f) if so, the corrective steps taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The incentive scheme had been formulated keeping in view the instructions issued by the Department of Public Enterprises.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Payments have been made to the employees not as an 'incentive' under the scheme but only as an 'advance' every year with the approval of the Board of Directors of ITPO on the condition that if the incentive scheme is not finally approved by the Government, the employees will have to refund the same.